prices fall below that level. If the market offers higher price than MSP, the farmers are free to sell at that price. In order to improve availability of credit to farmers, the Government in June, 2004 announced measures for doubling of flow of credit to agriculture sector within a period of three years. During 2007-08, the Banks disbursed Rs.2,54,657 crore against the target of Rs.2,25,000 crore.

(c) and (d) Through the extension activities farmers have been educated to adopt modern agricultural practices including growing organic crops and pesticides free-farming methods. The India Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) through its 567 Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVK) conducts number of training programmes for farmers on various aspects including production and use of bio and organic products/inputs.

Retail expansion plan of NAFED

722. SHRI MOHD. ALI KHAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether NAFED plans retail expansion through franchise route;

(b) if so, the details thereof especially in Andhra Pradesh;

(c) the aims and objective of such plans; and

(d) the implementation stage thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) and (b) Yes, Madam. NAFED has planned retail expansion through appointment of franchisees to run retail outlets in the name of NAFED Bazaar for sale of consumer products. NAFED has laid down guidelines for appointment of franchisees. Any party from any State including Andhra Prdesh can apply in accordance with the guidelines. It is proposed to start appointment of franchisees in Delhi and move to other places depending upon its success.

(c) The aims and objective of this plan is to make available quality products of daily need at reasonable price to the consumers.

(d) The implementation of NAFED's plan of retail expansion is at preliminary stage. Offers from interested parties have been invited which will be evaluated as per prescribed guidelines.

Rising Agricultural Input Cost

723. SHRI N.R. GOVINDARAJAR: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the rise in Agricultural input cost and its effect on the farmers in our country;

(b) whether the interest of farmers in Agriculture sector is declining as a result thereof;

(c) if so, the steps being taken to check the rise in Agricultural input cost;

(d) whether World Bank has suggested heavy investment in Agricultural sector for the welfare of millions of poor rural Indians since Agriculture is the main livelihood of rural poor and provides employment to 60 per cent of the working population in rural areas; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) The Index Number of Wholesale Prices (Base 1993-94=100) for agricultural inputs for the last three years is as under:

Annual Average (July-June)	Fertilizers	Electricity (Agriculture use)	Pesticides	Non-Electrical Machinery	Tractors	Lubricants	Diesel Oil (HSDO)	Diesel Oil (LDO)	Fodder	Cattle Feed
2005-06	175.1	300.8	150.2	189.6	179.4	203.2	446.8	464.0	198.8	176.1
2006-07	178.3	315.6	119.7	196.3	182.2	260.7	466.2	492.4	210.3	179.2
2007-08	184.6	314.8	119.2	202.2	185.5	279.6	459.4	522.3	201.3	196.0

SOURCE: Office of the Economic Adviser, Ministry of Commence and Industry.

The effect of rising input cost of cultivation of major crops is balanced by way of assuring Minimum Support Prices that help the farmers receive adequate return on their investment.

(b) Report on Situation Assessment Survey of Farmers titled "Some Aspects of Farming" (Reference Period January-December 2003) of the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO), submitted in July, 2005 covers in detail certain important aspects of farming, which, *inter-alia*, reports reasons for not considering it as a suitable profession. The details on reasons for not liking farming are given below:

Percentage of farmer households

Liking farming	Not Liking Farming due to reason				
	Not profitable	Lack of social status	Risky	Others	Total
60	27	2	8	3	40

No report as such on declining interest of farmers as a result of rise in input costs has been received.

(c) The Government of India has taken several steps to improve agricultural growth and return on investment in agriculture. These include declaration of Minimum Support Prices before sowing season, measures to improve production and productivity of various agricultural commodities through ensuring easy availability of credit, irrigation facilities, crop diversification, marketing infrastructure and extension services.

A National Policy of farmers, 2007 has been approved by the Government of India with its main aim to focus on the economic well-being of farmers by improving the economic viability of farming in addition to increasing production and productivity. Several programmes such as National Horticulture

Mission, Macro Management, National Food Security Mission and Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojna are under implementation to incentivise farmers to engage themselves profitably in the farming activities.

(d) and (e) World Development Report 2008 titled 'Agriculture for Development' emphasizes for greater investment in agriculture in developing countries. The report stresses that the agricultural sector must be placed at the centre of the development agenda for reducing extreme poverty and hunger.

The report says agriculture can provide pathways out of poverty for millions of rural poor. It says one way out is through a high-value agricultural revolution. Incentives to diversify into high-value horticulture, poultry, fish and dairy products *via* pricing reforms and an overhaul of subsidy support for cereals offer an opportunity to diversify farming systems.

According to the Report, the livelihood of farmers can be improved by increasing productivity of staple crops by making major investments in soil and water management and in agricultural research. It also advocates improving the investment climate for rural non-farm business and job schemes in rural areas. It also highlights the need to invest in rural infrastructure.

Damage to cultivable land due to flood

724. SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether his Ministry has conducted any research over the cultivable land being damaged by silt deposition during recurring floods in Assam to make it cultivable again which may be a boon to the flood affected farmers in the State;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. As per research conducted by Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat, about 35,000 ha of cultivable land has been damaged due to sand/silt deposition from floods in the State of Assam along Brahmaputra river and its tributaries. The soils covered with sand/silt upto depth of 20 cm. can be put to cultivation of high yielding rice (Basundhara, IR50, IR36, Joymati, Lachit, Chilerai, Luit, Kapilee, Disang, Prafulla, Gitesh etc.) in kharif and niger, toria, linseed and buck wheat during rabi season. A few flood tolerant rice varieties able to withstand submergence upto 15 days have also been developed.

(c) Does not arise.

Implementation of Vaidyanathan Committee Report

725. SHRI NANDAMURI HARIKRISHNA:
SHRI M.V. MYSURA REDDY:
Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state: